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HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT Thursday, March 11, 1937

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "MAPLE PRODUCTS." Information from the Bureau of Chemistry and Soils, United States Department of Agriculture.

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Homemakers, I have "an old sweet song" for you today -- maple sirup and sugar. You know, of course, that the earliest explorers in this country found the Indians making maple sirup and sugar from the sap of maple trees, along the St. Lawrence River. I'm told by the Bureau of Chemistry and Soils, of the U. S. Department of Agriculture, that although the crude methods of the Indians were soon improved upon by the white people, the general process, beyond the tapping and boiling, is still the same as it was at that time.

For many years maple sugar was the only sugar used among the early settlers of the northern part of the United States, and even in Kentucky and Virginia. As late as Civil War times Kentucky was one of the biggest maple-sugar producers. Many of these first maple sugar makers tried to produce a sugar equal to the cane sugar imported from the West Indies, but sometimes the results were disappointing.

Even if you don't live in a region where the maple sap starts flowing about this time of year, you doubtless buy maple sirup and sugar occasionally. Its delicate flavor makes it a great favorite and it sells almost everywhere. Most of the commercial production is in the northern and eastern States and in the southeastern part of Canada. Vermont, at present, leads in the number of gallons of sirup and pounds of sugar sold, but New York State is a close second. Ohio, Pennsylvania, Michigan, Wisconsin, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Maine, and Maryland, all contribute some maple products to the market, and in at least a dozen other States some maple products are made.

Up in Vermont they sell the plain sirup, the sugar in molded cakes, which the children eat like candy, and also a number of maple candies and "soft" sugar in buckets. This soft "bucket" sugar is partly crystallized sugar, very good as a spread on hot cakes or waffles, either just as it is, or thinned to a sirup with hot water. But your true connoisseur of maple flavor considers the real sirup as it comes from the boiling kettle much better in flavor than the thinned soft sugar. You can also find on the market many blends of part maple sirup and part cane or some other sirup. As the maple sirup is higher in price than cane sirup, this gives a maple-like product at less cost. Under the Food and Drugs Act, such blends must be labeled and must tell what percentage of real maple sirup they contain.

For those interested in making maple products, the Bureau of Chemistry and Soils has issued 3 mimeographed leaflets. One describes homemade maple candies. Another tells how to make maple cream. A third gives directions for making crystallized maple cordial candies.

The sugar chemists report that one characteristic of all maple candy is that it dries out very rapidly. Their studies of maple-sugar cookery showed that a way to overcome this difficulty to a considerable extent is to use a certain proportion of "inverted" maple sirup, which will hold moisture in the candy for a longer time.

The chemists also report that if maple sugar and sirup are heated to a high temperature, their delicate flavor will be lost. For that reason, and also for accuracy in results, they use a thermometer in all maple sugar cookery. They find that for uniform results they must have a uniform temperature in each batch of sirup.

They also use a hydrometer to determine the density of the sirup. Then for candy-making, they have on hand wire forks for dipping chocolate and bonbons, and scales for weighing the ingredients. The simple wire forks they use are just heavy brass wire twisted into lengths of about 10 inches with a loop or 2 tines at the ends. Because maple sirup foams up -- and sometimes over the top of the kettle -- when it boils, the chemists use a very large kettle for cooking it.

The chemists report that the marble top of a table or bureau makes a good slab for cooling fondant or the cream centers of chocolate. But maple fudge they pour out on heavy waxed paper over wood, where it will cool or set gradually instead of being suddenly chilled. (They often use inverted maple sugar to keep the fudge moist, but say that it is not absolutely necessary.) As for extra ingredients, the chemists suggest using any chopped nuts except peanuts in maple fudge. They say that butternuts are favorites for this purpose in Vermont. They also suggest shredded or dessicated coconut in maple fudge instead of nuts.

Crystallized maple cordial candy is a very fancy maple candy. It has a liquid maple sirup enclosed in a shell of crystalline maple sugar, which in turn has a coat of maple fondant, covered with sparkling crystals of maple sugar. The chemists say that with the right equipment even this candy is not hard to make. They pour the sirup into little molds dusted with starch, which causes the outsides to crystallize.

Maple cream is the delicious smooth buttery spread that goes so well in sandwiches, whether they are for the children's school lunch or for afternoon tea. This is another "inverted" maple-sirup product. Anyone interested can have the exact directions for making it by writing the Department of Agriculture in Washington, D. C.

You may be interested to know that in addition to the studies of maple candy making carried on by its carbohydrate laboratory, the Bureau of Chemistry and Soils has done a great deal to encourage the production of maple sirup of high quality and to establish uniform color standards for grading the sirup. The majority of producers now use these color standards.

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